

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ADDIS 14968 311321Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 /026 W

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O P 311231Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7542

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 14968

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS ET US

SUBJECT: KAGNEW II

REF: STATE 304765

1. EMBASSY HAS SEEN ASSOCIATED PRESS DISPATCH FROM BEIRUT DATED 30 DEC. WHICH MAY BE SOURCE OF INFO REPORTED REFTEL. DISPATCH REFERS TO A "DISPUTE" BETWEEN FIELD COMMANDERS AND POLITICAL LEADERS OF "SECESSIONISTS" HOLDING AMERICAN, BRITISH AND ITALIAN CAPTIVES (NO MENTION OF CHINESE) IN ERITREA. SOURCE IDENTIFIED AS OSMAN SALEH SABBI WHO REPORTEDLY ISSUED STATEMENT DEC 30 DURING BRIEF STOPOVER IN BEIRUT.

2. ACCORDING REPORT, OSMAN SAID "WE" STILL NEGOTIATING WITH OUR MILITARY COMMANDERS TO ENSURE RELEASE OF ALL CAPTIVES WITHOUT ANY CONDITIONS. OSMAN HAS PERSUADED MILITARY COLLEAGUES TO DROP DEMAND FOR FIVE MILLION DOLLAR RANSOM FOR FIVE AMERICANS, ONE BRITISH AND ONE ITALIAN. BUT, ACCORDING OSMAN, MILITARY ARE STILL INSISTING THAT USG ISSUE PUBLIC DECLARATION THAT IT CALLING OFF ALL MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO ETHIOPIA.

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3. DISPATCH AT THAT POINT WAS GARBLED, BUT APPARENTLY

REPORTS OSMAN AS LINKING SAUDI ARABIA WITH "TREMENDOUS" PRESSURE TO RELEASE PRISONERS BEFORE NEW YEAR. EVEN SYRIA AND IRAQ, WHO ARE MAJOR ARMS SUPPLIERS FOR FRONT ALONG WITH LIBYA, ARE NOW ASKING FRONT TO FREE CAPTIVES WITHOUT PRIOR CONDITIONS AND TO STOP KIDNAPPING OF ANY MORE FOREIGNERS IN ERITREA. HE DOUBTED, HOWEVER, THAT CAPTIVES WOULD BE RELEASED BEFORE NEW YEAR.

4. OSMAN FURTHER REPORTED AS SAYING HE WISHED ASSURE FAMILIES OF ALL SEVEN CAPTIVES THAT THEY IN GOOD SHAPE AND BEING WELL TREATED. "WE" ARE WILLING TO RELAY MESSAGES TO CAPTIVES (FURTHER GARBLE) APPARENTLY THROUGH SUDAN UNTIL THEY ARE RELEASED, "WHICH I HAVE NO DOUBT THEY WILL BE."

5. COMMENT: FROM HERE, IT APPEARS OSMAN IS STILL PURSUING LINE HE HAS GENERALLY FOLLOWED ALL ALONG, NAMELY THAT CAPTIVES SHOULD BE RELEASED WITHOUT CONDITIONS. WHETHER HE REALLY FEELS UNDER PRESSURE FROM ARAB ARMS SUPPLIERS IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO JUDGE. IT MAY BE TRUE, OR HE MAY BE USING IT AS A TACTIC IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH HIS MILITARY PEOPLE. EITHER WAY COULD BE HELPFUL. HE HAS AT LEAST CONFIRMED SPLIT BETWEEN THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY WINGS OF THE FRONT OVER WHAT TO DO WITH THE CAPTIVES.

6. SHOULD DEPT OR ANY ADDRESSEE WISH QUERY AP FOR FULL TEXT OF DISPATCH, FACT THAT WE HAVE SEEN COPY OF IT SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE DIVULGED.  
HUMMEL

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## Message Attributes

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